
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, October 17, 2013
Certification Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Olsen called the Certification Hearing to order at approximately 6:08 pm. He announced that a quorum was present.

Mr. Olsen announced that the purpose of the hearing was to consider if the conditions of the properties on the agenda met any of the 12 conditions set by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended and the City of Reading Blighted Property Review Committee Ordinance, and could be certified or determined as blighted.

BPRC Attendance: L. Olsen, M. Wolfe, H. Urena, W. Bealer, D. Luckey

Staff Attendance: L. Kelleher, T. Butler, Esq., K. Yeager

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to approve the September meeting minutes as written. The motion was approved unanimously.

Remove from the Process

Mr. Olsen stated that **531 Schuylkill Avenue no longer meets the blighted criteria** as it was demolished. He reminded the committee that the property partially collapsed just before the July hearing. **He stated that this property is removed from the process as it has been demolished.**

Mr. Olsen asked Ms. Butler, attorney from the City's Law Department, to conduct the hearing. He stated that properties with owners present will be taken first and the remaining properties will be handled in a consent agenda fashion.

Ms. Butler explained the hearing procedures and summarized the blighted conditions as set forth in the City's Blighted Property ordinance. All property owners were provided with a copy of the property packets that will be entered into the record. She reiterated that properties with owners present would be taken first and the properties without representation would be taken in a consent agenda format.

Determination Hearing

1. 643 N 9th St, Lillian Marquez, owner, 2810 Kutztown Rd., 19605, purchased May 2012

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step forward. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Ms. Lillian Marquez.

Ms. Butler entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 26, 2013
- Notice posted on the property on August 28, 2013
- Delinquent water charges \$102.25; Water off September 2010
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Electric – on
- Gas meter removed 6-2010
- Trades: recent fire damage unable to verify stability
- Codes: 5 QoL trash and weeds, work order to secure property, unpaid housing permit
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling no response
- Liens N/A

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Marquez continues to work on the property and noted the replacement of the windows; however, the building is still vacant and the rehab plan is incomplete.

Ms. Marquez stated that since she purchased the property her efforts to rehab the property have been thwarted by vandalism and burglary. She stated that she plans to continue to rehab the property.

Mr. Luckey suggested tabling the property as he is satisfied with the progress shown. He inquired when the property will be occupied. Ms. Marquez stated that she intends to sell the property when it is rehabbed. Ms. Kelleher stated that when the rehab is complete the property should be registered as “vacant for sale”. Mr. Luckey agreed, as that designation will avoid problems.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Luckey moved, seconded by Ms. Wolfe, to table the certification of 643 N 9th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. 701 Walnut St, Lou Burgos, owner 1647 Perkiomen Ave, 19602, purchased March 2012

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step forward. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Mr. Burgos.

Ms. Butler entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 26, 2013
- Notice posted on the property on August 28, 2013
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$188.59; Water on
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Electric – off
- Gas meter removed 2008
- Trades: Still missing windows and interior still exposed to the elements, the sidewalk has been replaced
- Codes: NOV for sidewalk, window and downspout damage
- Trash and Recycling no response
- Liens N/A

Ms. Butler called the Committee's attention to the letter submitted by Mr. Burgos, which states that the windows were recently delivered.

Mr. Burgos stated that he spoke with the contractor who promised to install the windows by Monday of next week. He stated that he will restore electric service when the windows are installed.

Mr. Olsen confirmed that the sidewalk has been replaced and the rubble has been cleared.

Mr. Urena questioned the condition of the interior of the property. Mr. Burgos stated that he intends to rehab the property and either sell it or open a retail facility.

Mr. Luckey inquired about the completion schedule. Mr. Burgos stated that he is hoping to sell the property after the rehab is complete.

Ms. Butler noted that Mr. Burgos has been addressing the rehab issues identified.

Mr. Luckey suggested tabling the property due to the progress made.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to table the certification of 701 Walnut Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. 443 S 5th St, Ann Marie Almario, owner, 443 S 5th St., Reading 19602 purchased Feb 2004

Ms. Butler called the property owner to the podium. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Ms. Almario.

Ms. Butler entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 28, 2013
- Notice posted on the property on August 28, 2013
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$430.75; Water on
- Delinquent Taxes \$341.10 2012 City, County & School
- Electric – on
- Gas - on
- Trades: repairs to porch are unsafe, columns do not bear to grade (flooring)
- Codes: NOV for porch repairs, peeling paint, damaged sidewalk
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling no response
- Liens N/A

Ms. Almario distributed photos of the exterior of the property; however, the photos did not resolve the issues regarding the repairs to the porch and columns. She stated that she has a permit to repair the porch and that the permit expires in December. She stated that because she and her husband are disabled, they needed to find a contractor who would take payment on a payment plan schedule.

Ms. Wolfe inquired about Ms. Almario's plans for the property. Ms. Almario stated that she and her husband expect to remain living at the property.

Mr. Olsen inquired about the eligibility of the property as it is not vacant. Ms. Butler explained that the law does not require a property to be vacant or abandoned.

Mr. Olsen suggested tabling the property until Ms. Butler reviews the legislation.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to table the certification of 443 S 5th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. 1925 N 14th St, Victor Armas, owner, 5672 Allentown Pike Reading 19605, purchased April 2004

Ms. Butler stated that the property owner is not present but two neighbors would like to testify about the property.

Ms. Butler entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 26, 2013
- Notice posted on the property on August 28, 2013
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$1732.01; Water off 12-2012
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Electric – off
- Gas meter removed 2012
- Trades: Needs new roof, fire damaged
- Codes: 5 QoL trash and weeds, NOV tree maintenance, broken windows, roof damage, unsecure
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling no response
- Liens N/A

Ms. Butler stated that the property owner is still not present.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment.

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Janice Scull, who stated that her mother lives next to this property. She stated that since the fire in October 2012, the owner has been

absent. She said this property is now the eyesore in a lovely neighborhood. She stated that windows in the upper floors are still open and she noted the damage rodents and vermin can do.

Ms. Butler asked Mr. Yeager to place a work order to secure the broken windows.

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Marian Pounder who stated that she resides behind the property at 14th St. and College Avenue. She reported that the service that mows the grass totally ignores the rear portion of the property. She said that the overgrowth has attracted vermin and rodents. She stated that this gorgeous neighborhood now has a terrible eyesore.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Mr. Corcoran, to approve the certification of 1925 North 14th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. 200 W Oley St, Marilyn Nye, owner, 531 Schuylkill Ave Reading 19601, no purchase date listed

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step forward. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Mrs. Nye.

Ms. Butler entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 26, 2013
- Notice posted on the property on August 28, 2013
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$126.56; Water on
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Electric – on
- Gas – N/A
- Trades: Deteriorated porch on Weiser St side of property
- Codes: NOV for broken window, crumbling concrete, damage to the stairs, drainage system, windows, hatchway and exterior surfaces, 7 unpaid QoLs weeds, indoor furniture outside, 1 No Show placard
- Trash and Recycling – No response
- Liens N/A

Ms. Butler stated that Mr. Yeager from Property Maintenance went to the property today to confirm that the broken window remains an issue.

Ms. Nye inquired why the notices are not sent to her Horton Avenue address. She stated that during a break in her pipes were stolen and the kitchen was stolen. She stated that the water and electric are turned off. She stated that she is unable to find a contractor who is willing to work in Reading. She expressed the belief that Property Maintenance is picking on her. She stated that she purchased this property as retirement income; however, she was unable to keep up with the property after the last tenant damaged the property. She stated that she always pays her bills.

Ms. Butler asked Ms. Nye to confirm that the water and electric are turned off. Ms. Nye stated that the water and electric at the property are turned off. She stated that the utilities were turned off due to the damage done by the tenant and a break in. She stated that the kitchens on the first and second floors were stolen.

Ms. Wolfe asked Ms. Nye to describe her plans for the property. Ms. Nye stated that she is unsure as she has no desire to come into Reading. She again spoke about the repeated break-ins.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Ms. Wolfe, to approve the certification of 200 West Oley Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

Certification Consent Agenda

Ms. Butler stated that the following properties are unrepresented at tonight's hearing:

- 1. 45 S 10th St, Benjamin Epstein and Menachm Ohana, owners, 1455 E 15th Street, Brooklyn NY 11230, purchased Nov 2006**
- 2. 47 S 10th St., Robert Barto, owner, 5 Park Place Dr., Sinking Spring, PA 19608, purchased Dec 1999**
- 3. 1054 N 10th St., Stephen Sullivan, owner, 1207 N 13th St, Reading, 19604, purchased Aug 2001**
- 4. 641 N 9th St, Juan Rodriguez, 21 Myrtle Ave., Clifton NJ 07014, purchased April 2005**

5. 645 N 9th St, Hector Guerrero & Lissy Epinal, owner, 605 51st St, Apt 1, Brooklyn NY 11220, purchased Nov 2004

6. 1505 Perkiomen Ave, Jermaine Monroe, owner, 1505 Perkiomen Ave, Reading 19602, purchased April 2007

7. 722 A Moss St, Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., owners, 3300 SW 34th Ave Ste 101 Osceola FL 34474, purchased May 2013

8. 1400 Hampden Blvd, Marie Pierre, owner, 1400 Hampden Blvd 19604, purchased Jan 2004

9. 20 S 10th St, Luke Beachy, owner, 136 W Wesner Rd., Blandon 19510, purchased April 2008

10. 700 N 10th, Mercedes Rodriguez, PO Box 12866, Reading, purchased March 2004

Ms. Butler inquired if the property owners for these properties were present. No one responded.

Ms. Butler stated that these properties meet at least one of the blight criteria. In summary:

- All notices were mailed on August 26, 2013 and posted on or about August 28, 2013
 - 1. 45 S 10th St.** – Delinquent water \$102.01, water off since 2008, Electric off, Gas inactive since 2005, Trades – missing front porch railing, Codes - unpaid repair extension, no housing permit.
 - 2. 47 S 10th St.** – Delinquent water \$3.53 water off since 2010, Delinquent taxes \$2726.76 2010-2012 City, County and School taxes, Electric off, Gas meter removed, Codes – NOV deteriorating condition, windows bricks siding
 - 3. 1054 N 10th St.** – Water off 2006, Electric off, Gas meter removed, Codes – 4 unpaid QoL, 2 No Shows, unpaid housing permit
 - 4. 641 N 9th St** – Delinquent water, water off since 2010, Electric off, Gas meter removed, Trades – recent fire damage, Codes – 17 unpaid QoL trash and weeds, 4 work orders, 2 No Shows, unpaid housing permit 5 years
 - 5. 645 N 9th St** – Delinquent water \$1462.51, Water off since 2009, Electric off, Gas meter removed, Trades – recent fire damage, Codes – 24 unpaid QoL trash and weeds, 4 work orders, 3 No Show placard, NOV trash, unsecured property, exterior condition
 - 6. 1505 Perkiomen Ave.** – Delinquent water \$2106.77, water off 2009, Electric on,

Gas meter removed, Trades – warped decking, tarp on roof indicates leaking and incomplete repair or replacement, 1 unpaid QoL, NOV stairs, porch, windows, unsecured property, unpaid housing for 5 years

7. 722 A Moss St. – Delinquent water \$2944.03, water off since 2010, Delinquent taxes \$1485.31 2012 City, County and School, Codes – 9 unpaid QoL trash and weeds, NOV no water, sidewalk, 3 No Show placard

8. 1400 Hampden Blvd. – Delinquent water \$1571.05, Water off, Electric off, Codes – 8 unpaid QoL trash and weeds, 2 work orders, NOV no heat

9. 20 S 10th St. – Delinquent water \$122.16, Gas inactive since 2011, Trades – general disrepair, Codes – Unpaid 2 year inspection fee

10. 700 N 10th – Delinquent water \$879.41, Delinquent taxes \$7814.41 2008-2012 City, County School, Electric off, Trades – permits to repair fire damage, repairs in progress, Codes – unpaid work order, Inspection scheduled for Oct 29, 2013

Ms. Butler again inquired if the property owners were present and no one responded.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Ms. Wolfe, to approve the certification of the Consent Agenda properties as blighted properties. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lucky moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk